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ART. XII. — CRITICAL NOTICES.

1. — *Florence Betrayed, or the Last Days of the Republic.* Translated from the Italian of MASSIMO D'AZEGLIO, by a Lady. Boston: William V. Spencer. 1856. 12mo. pp. 529.

It is strange that the most noted work of the most variously gifted of living Italian scholars has waited so long for a translator. It is fifteen years since the announcement in Milan of a fresh historical romance by the son-in-law of Manzoni suggested anew the Scripture story of Elijah and Elisha. Already the heir of a noble name had gained notable triumphs on the field of art. His pictures, the fruit of patient study in the galleries of Rome, had been exhibited with high praise in the galleries of Turin and Paris, and D'Azeglio seemed likely to be for Italy what Lessing is for Germany and Vernét for France. His masterpiece, "The Beginning of the Sforzas," has been excelled by few historical pictures of this century. His acquaintance with Grossi and his relation to Manzoni, however, changed somewhat the direction of his ambition. He took up the pen instead of the pencil, and gave himself, in his sketches of the past of Italy, to the inspiring task of awakening and guiding the national spirit by examples from history. His first romance was received with immense enthusiasm, which was increased by the appearance of the work which we notice. Events hastened more rapidly than his hope. Five years later, the painter, the scholar, the novelist, the musician (for music, too, is one of D'Azeglio's accomplishments), appeared as a political writer, in a work which attracted wide regard, and was translated into several tongues. The tract on the "Recent Affairs of Rome" was followed by numerous other political papers, in which liberal views were advocated with great ability. At the breaking out of the war of 1848, the patriotic nobleman was found in the army of his native province, and was wounded severely in the battle of Vicenza. With the restoration of peace, his position as a statesman was assured. He became the virtual ruler of Sardinia, holding the office of President of the Council of Ministers, and in the late negotiations at Paris his name is classed with that of the English and Russian plenipotentiaries. There is no living statesman who has achieved fame in so many walks.

His most popular production is that which has just been given to American readers with a changed title. We cannot quite appreciate the translator's reasons for dropping the musical Italian names, "I Palleschi é I Piagnoni," and substituting the prosaic "Florence Betrayed."

The sale of a book depends more upon the name of its author than upon its title, and an obscure title is often a help, rather than an injury. The translation is, on the whole, extremely well done, into good idiomatic English. The Italian exclamations have been very successfully rendered by English equivalents, and the temptation to use words of Latin derivation, which sorely besets one who translates Spanish or Italian, has been quite avoided. The translation is fully as good as that of the "Promessi Sposi." It has evidently been prepared with great care and with conscientious fidelity. We can only regret that it has not been enriched by more notes of explanation, which to an American reader are very necessary, and by a map of Florence and its environs, which would exhibit to the eye the movements of the parties which the story so minutely describes.

The romance itself is a work of extraordinary power, both in the painting of scenes and in the drawing of character. Its subject is the last fruitless struggle of the "Beautiful" city to maintain its liberties against Papal cunning and Imperial rapacity. Though the time is that fatal year 1529-30, the author skilfully manages, in the person of old Niccolo da Lapi, to bind to the story the earlier heroic times of Cosmo, Lorenzo, and Savonarola, and gathers up in the life of this gray-haired patriot the glory of all the former days. The story begins at the last act of a splendid drama, of which it is the tragic consummation. And it holds, too, the secret burden of prophecy, showing in every part that the author believes in a future for Italy, and means to keep in the memory of his countrymen the prayers and the predictions of their ancient patriots and prophets. It has so much of this prophetic spirit, that under the present *régime* it would be impossible to circulate it beyond the Sardinian states.

Every variety of Florentine life in the sixteenth century is described. We have the selfish and dissolute nobleman, the avaricious official, the wealthy merchant, the poor mechanic, the peasant, and the outcast; the monk of "San Marco," the great general, and the reckless adventurer; a wedding and a funeral; a battle on land and a battle at sea, a night attack, and a popular outbreak; home and camp; palace and prison; street and cloister, — all brought before us in distinct and lifelike pictures. The avenues, the squares, the churches, the gates, of Florence; the hills and villas and ravines around it; the mists of the autumn evening and the warm sun of midday, — all that gives enchantment to that fascinating region the author has marked and remembered. While the description has the charm of poetry, it has the severe fidelity of history. The characters are real characters, and the interest of the narrative is quite as much historical as romantic. Unlike some of their French

and English contemporaries, the Italian writers of romance leave upon our minds a profound conviction that they give the truth of history. The brilliant feuilletons of M. Dumas and the ponderous delineations of Mr. James have added very little to correct knowledge of France and its people in the middle centuries. But an American reader may get from "The Betrothed" and from "Florence Betrayed" a more exact idea of Italian life and manners than he will derive from any other source.

2. — *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to El Medinah and Meccah.*
By RICHARD F. BURTON, Lieut. Bombay Army. With an Introduction by BAYARD TAYLOR. New York: G. P. Putnam & Co. 1856. 12mo. pp. 492.

If a novel subject, a graceful style, graphic descriptions of scenery, faithful delineations of life and manners, adorned by various learning and infused with refined humor, can give merit and attractiveness to a volume of travels, the volume before us will be entitled to the highest rank. Its subject is not only novel, but unique. But one traveller within the memory of the living has anticipated Lieutenant Burton in a narrative of pilgrimage to the holy cities of Islam; and the work of Burckhardt, published forty years ago, has long been out of print, and is found in few libraries. Mr. Burton's account is substantially the first, as it is certainly the best, account of the Hejaz and its cities that has appeared in an English dress. It does for Arabia what Dr. Barth's book does for the interior of Africa, and Huc's book for Thibet and China, — opens to our familiar knowledge a prohibited region. After reading this narrative, we seem to be as well acquainted with the Moslem Canaan as with that Jewish and Christian Sacred Land which dozens of new itineraries annually illustrate. There seems to be nothing omitted in the story, nothing left for future travellers to tell.

Only a successful issue could justify such a daring adventure as this which Mr. Burton relates. For a Christian to assume a Moslem disguise, and to pass himself off as a believer in the Prophet, is as difficult as for the Ethiopian to change his skin or the leopard his spots. Not one man in a myriad would be equal to such an elaborate and complicated stratagem. The deception must be all but a change of nature. Dress, language, posture, movement, temperament, tastes, must all be altered. The method of walking, of drinking, of talking and listening,